

For the next week Africa will be page one news due to the President's trip to the continent. Then, once again, news on Africa will most likely recede to the back pages of our major newspapers and disappear. However, what many Americans don't realize is the increasing importance of Africa to the world and the United States.

Americans now import more than one quarter of their oil from the African continent. In the coming years, due to new major oil discoveries in the Gulf of Guinea off the west coast of Africa the percentage of African oil Americans consume will most likely rise. It will rise because there are quantities of untapped oil reserves on the continent, and it will rise because the U.S. realizes that oil from the Middle East can easily fall prey to the vagaries of war and politics.

Africa is so important to us, in part, because it is a continent rich in natural resources. Copper, diamonds, gold, and wood are all in abundance throughout the continent. The Congo River itself has enough potential hydroelectric power to supply the electrical needs of the whole continent. And the continent still has abundant rain forests, which have been described as the lungs of the world.

We as legislators can no longer afford to ignore Africa or view it solely through the lens of disaster and peril. Yes, we cannot deny that there are serious health problems in Africa with HIV/AIDS and malaria leading the list. There is crushing poverty throughout the continent. Africans living on less than a dollar a day now number over 315 million, according to a recent World Bank survey. Serious conflicts in the Congo—where not thousands but millions have perished—and West Africa still plague the continent and put a serious drag on the development of human resources and capital.

We cannot afford to ignore Africa because people are beginning to realize that failed states and crushing poverty are fertile breeding grounds for terrorist and criminal groups. We cannot afford to ignore Africa because the world is smaller and more interconnected. From the war on terrorism to the supply of crucial resources, from the campaign against threatening diseases to the opportunities for economic trade and investment, Africa is a key global player. We cannot afford to ignore Africa because we now ignore it at our own peril.

Africa matters in many ways. Not all the news coming out of Africa is gloomy. Trade and investments with Africa are growing. U.S. exports totaled over \$5.8 billion last year, while U.S. imports were \$18 billion. Nigeria

alone is the fifth largest supplier of oil to the U.S. Despite appearances, Africa is more peaceful today than in the 1980s and 1990s. Democracy is also taking root in many parts of Africa.

But Africa needs increased resources to deal with the multitude of problems. U.S. assistance to Africa has been stagnant for many years, and real development assistance to the continent is less than \$500 million. Although total U.S. assistance to Africa may total about \$2 billion, a large chunk of this is for humanitarian and health related programs. Many programs—including in the areas of agriculture, democracy, conflict resolution, trade and investment—have suffered from significant cutbacks. In short, Africa needs increased assistance if it is truly to be brought into the mainstream world economy.

The Congressional Black Caucus has been a staunch advocate and played a pivotal role in strengthening the cultural, political and economic ties between Africa and the United States. I am therefore concerned, but not surprised, that President Bush did not seek out the guidance and assistance of the CBC before making his sojourn to Africa. This is not surprising because, as our chairman recently noted, "The President has declined all of our offers to meet with him since our last discussion of January 31, 2001."

In closing, I want to make a few remarks on the President's proposal to send in U.S. peacekeepers to Liberia. First, I recognize the longstanding historical ties between the U.S. and Liberia. I don't believe it will be as difficult to win the hearts and minds of Liberians who are predisposed to look upon the U.S. with favor. I generally support the concept of a peacekeeping mission to Liberia. However, I believe that a U.S.—led peacekeeping mission should be placed under the auspices of the United Nations. The United States by itself cannot be the policeman of the world, and our forces are already spread thin by our other significant commitments around the world. Any U.S. actions in Liberia will have greater credibility if they have the seal of approval of an international body.

We must also think through very carefully our commitment to place U.S. forces in Liberia. We must have a mission that is clearly defined, and we must have an exit plan that is articulated and understood by the American public. I also believe that any plan to introduce U.S. forces in Liberia should be subjected to serious congressional oversight and approval.

The Devil is in the details. The administration must first clearly articulate its methods

and goals before any U.S. troops are put on the ground.

RECOGNIZING CHARLES REESE,
DISTRICT GOVERNOR OF DISTRICT
5670 OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 8, 2003

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a Kansan devoted to his community and to the State of Kansas. Mr. Charles Reese, a Rotarian since 1975, will be installed as the District Governor of District 5670 of Rotary International on Friday, July 11.

I am personally proud of Mr. Reese, who resides in my hometown of Hays, Kansas. District 5670 encompasses Hays and all of northwest Kansas. As District Governor, Mr. Reese will lead 31 Rotary clubs with 1200 members in a 38-county region.

Reese's dedication to his community is well known. Mr. Reese served the Hays community as a board member of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry and as chairman of the board of the Kansas PRIDE program. Last year, Charles retired as Vice President of Corporate Relations for Midwest Energy, an electric and natural gas utility based in Hays.

Mr. Reese's commitment to community service is an example of tremendous leadership. He served as President of the Heartland of Development Corporation and is currently serving as interim director of the Ellis County Coalition for Economic Development. Mr. Reese and his wife, Louise, have also traveled to Panama with the Rotary District HungerPlus service teams. For his volunteer work in economic development, Charles received the 2002 Volunteer of the Year award from the Kansas Economic Development Association.

Not least of all, Charles and Louise are the proud parents of three grown daughters and grandparents of three grandsons. The family will celebrate Charles' formal installation as District Governor at a banquet Friday evening, July 11, in Hays.

Charles Reese is a role model for service to others. His devotion to his community, and to Rotary International, reflects his strong character and sense of duty to community, state, and nation.